Sermon Preached by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the occasion of the meetings of the Primates and Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion: St Paul's Church, Toronto, Sunday, 16 March.

I would first like to express my pleasure at visiting Canada once again, and also the mixture of encouragement and trepidation I feel at being asked to occupy for a second time in a year the pulpit of this famous and friendly church.

On my last visit I was able to see something of the vastness of Canada, to enjoy the hospitality of your people in all their rich variety.

As I travelled from Cornersbrook to Victoria and up to the Yukon at every stage I discovered the vitality of a Church committed to living the Christian Gospel and concerned to make that Gospel real in everyday life.

Today you have welcomed in your midst the Primates, the senior Archbishops, of the Anglican Communion, together with members of the Anglican Consultative Council. If you get to know some of them personally you will certainly be encouraged, as I have been, by the stories they can tell you. Of the witness of our tiny Anglican Church in the Middle East, of the mixture of suffering and exhuberance which characterizes so many churches in Africa, of the reconciling ministry of the Church in Ireland, of the parts of the Anglican Communion where English is very much a second language, and where the Church is breaking new ground and expanding in new directions. In these few days we have been praying together, sharing our hopes and fears and making our future plans. We thank God that we are able to do all these things freely in the setting of a Canadian Church supported by your prayers and hospitality.

Tonight I want to point to the future by recalling our past. I want to draw your attention to the beginnings of the Church.

"And they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And there fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need".

Acts 2:42-45

In this passage from the Acts of the Apostles St Luke tells us the story of the earliest Christians. St Luke is the artist to whom alone we owe the story of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, Martha and Mary as well as the story of the cost of discipleship - Jesus setting his face to go up to Jerusalem and the cross - the theme of passion Sunday. The agnostic Renam said "There is hardly a cynic to be found who will not say "Thank God for St Luke". In my text he paints a beautiful miniature of life together in the infant church. He gives us an idealized summary of the first Christian fellowship. Tonight I want to suggest that as leaders and representatives of the worldwide Anglican Communion, as well as of the local Church of Toronto, we should do well to ponder on the life of the early Christian community encapsulated by St Luke.

I want to underscore three essential ingredients of the Church we find there. I believe they are as necessary for us today as they were for the Church of the Apostles. First we see an emphasis on loyalty to the Apostolic teaching, to the Church as a communion and fellowhip, and to its sacramental and spiritual life. So we begin with steadfastness to the tradition we have recieved.

Secondly, St Luke speaks of the apostles working such wonders and signs that fear and awe fell upon everyone who witnessed them. So the second emphasis must be upon the need for Christians to be people of fresh inspiration - spirited characters who expect great things of God. The Church should be a sign of the breaking in of God's Kingdom. In the face of a weary and worldly cynicism, Christians should have that magic ability to take risks, to create surprises. Amongst us is a Bishop from China. As I have met in that country Christian groups who kept the faith vibrant through the years when attempts were made to obliterate religion I was full of awe at the signs and wonders of the Spirit.

And thirdly, we hear of the first Christians sharing all things in common and distributing to those in need. The Church is not only to be loyal to the tradition and be capable of new things; it is also to have a deep commitment to the poor. To steadfastness and inspiration we must add the final necessary ingredient - service to the world.

In the modern world, where change and fashion dominate society, steadfastness to the apostolic tradition sounds a distinctly old fashioned virtue. But we need to be cautious about the cult of the contemporary. The bright eyed salesman of some new religion cannot fail to impress us by his enthusiasm on the doorstep or on T V. But because they have no roots such religions spring up and flourish for a time but suddenly wither and die As personalities we know the importance of good foundations laid in childhood - they hold us together. In a novel by Graham Greene someone is described as not so much a person, more a civil war. And we know what he means. As with people, so with churches. Unless a community lives in its tradition it will be built on sand. But just as modernity can enslave, so also can a false

traditionalism. We must seek to be loyal to the credal doctrines of the Church without excessive concern for confessional exactitude. While we must be careful not to strain the bonds of communion by embracing changes others can not yet accept, we must also be at great pains to avoid making schism in the body of Christ. Perhaps what I am searching for is best described by an attitude of 'crictical reverence' for tradition.

I have a picture of a eucharist in New Delhi two weeks ago. The music was in an unfamiliar Indian cadence. The congregation sat cross legged on the ground with flowers strewn around. The incense of jos-sticks perfumed the air. The bread was a japati loaf and saffron shawls did for vestments. Yet here was steadfastness at the heart of the matter. Like the earliest Christians they were truly devoted to the Breaking of the Bread and the Prayers, and yet there was a freshness about it all which lifted the heart.

The mere repitition of the Apostolic words is not enough. The Gospel was originally a new thing and our Lord surprized his hearers. He taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes. So the Church needs to translate the Gospel so that it really conveys the surprise of the good news once again. The Churches' proclamation needs to liberate and invigorate. All too often the Word of God degenerates into a dull conformity with little sparkle or vitality. How often have we been to services which never quite got off the ground.

But it need not be so. Forgive another illustration from my recent visit to India. This time a packed church in a remote village, poor in this world's goods but rich in commitment and enthusiasm for the Lord. I faced an eager sea of attentive faces and bright curious eyes, with the crowd overflowing outside and peering in at the doors and windows.

I was forcibly reminded of the images of the Gospel narratives. I half-expected the sick to be let down through the roof because of the press of the crowd. For these Christians the Gospel was indeed good news.

Nor need we despair of recapturing this experience in the West. It was that great Anglican lay apologist for the faith, C S Lewis, who entitled the autobiography of his conversion: "Surprised by Joy". That should be a familiar experience for a Christian.

To the legacy of the past and the experience of the present we add the Christian's service to the world. Of course, the Church has always been concerned for the poor, the sick, and the oppressed. But in recent years the Church has become more aware of the need to tackle the fundamental causes behind the inequitable distribution of the world's resources and the injustice which threatens peace. Though the Church must not simply play politics, it cannot fail to speak out on the moral issues facing humanity.

We must as Christians be the sworn foes of persecution, of arbitrary imprisonment, of racial discrimination of any kind. We must be restless and unhappy when the freedom of millions is thwarted by hunger and starvation and our Christian discipleship will again and again be tested by the will of our practical action in these heartbreaking tragedies.

But we shall also be aware that communities can be well fed and prosperous and highly cultured and liberal and democratic in their institutions and yet be full of selfishness, self indulgence, indecent luxury, and domestic tragedy and at the mercy of contemporary blasts of sentiment and folly which undermine the freedom of the conscience and the mind.

Here in Canada you have an Anglican Primate who has never been afraid to speak out - in season and out of season. This gives me the opportunity to pay tribute to Archbishop Ted Scott as he approaches retirement. The Church in Canada, the Anglican Communion, the World Church all owe him much. Perhaps the most appropriate tribute which could be paid to him has already been made. His nomination as one of the Commonwealth 'Emminent

Persons Group' on South Africa. This surely speaks more than words of the trust and respect in which he is held in Church and State. He epitomizes Christian service to the world.

The test of a good recipe is not only in its having the right ingredients, but also having the right mix. So there must be a right balance between steadfastness, inspiration of the Spirit and service. I want to commend to the Anglican Communion a proper inter-relationship between traditional, experiential and radical Christianity.

I believe Anglican Christianity may have a special vocation here. We have been long used to holding different emphases together. Protestant, Catholic and Liberal stands are interwoven with their differing stresses on scripture, tradition and reason. But perhaps those older emphases are now giving way to a fresh Christian alignment. And re-alignments can threaten to produce new divisions.

Observers of contemporary Christianity now see the older antagonism between Catholism and Protestantism as potentially resolvable in the Ecumenical movement. But within all the existing Churches new tensions can be discovered. There are traditionalists. Is it not true that conservative Christians, whether Catholics or Protestants, have much more in common with each other than with their liberal brothers and sisters? But on their own they can fossilize the Church. It's also a commonplace that the Charismatic movement unites all Christians who champion renewal and definite commitment. But they can be sharply divided from fellow members of the same Church. They can be exclusive. And we know our Lord had severe things to say to religious know alls.

Radical Christians again have a common cause in their bias towards the poor and oppressed and yet they can have the impatience and arrogance of those who believe all men are brothers except those they disagree with. The emergent Church of the 21st century looks very much as if it will have these three orientations. Will the older divides be reconciled only for new splits to appear.

Perhaps a new Anglican comprehensiveness is required so that we can hold together the traditional, the experiential and the radical - steadfastness, inspiration and service.

Of course these emphases are found within all the great Christian traditions. But it has been the special vocation of Anglicanism to seek to hold together wide diversity. The need for such comprehension will certainly become no less in the future. It may be our special gift to the wider Church.

May the Anglican Communion continue to be devoted to the apostolic teaching, fellowship and sacramental life. May it also continue to surprise by joy those who experience the Gospel. May it offer itself in loving service to the whole of humanity.

And may our deliberations and decisions here in Toronto, supported by your worship and prayers, enable Anglicans to hold together all these things - in order that we can bring our gifts as Anglicans to the whole Church of Jesus Christ. In the words of a saint who lived 800 years ago

> "There is no stopping place in this life. No, nor was there ever one for any man, no matter how far along the line he's gone. This then above all things: 'Be ready for the gifts of God, and always for new ones'".